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SUBJECT: GOI WARNS POWELL OF GROWING UML-MAOIST ALLIANCE
AND PROMISES TO INCREASE INDO-NEPAL BORDER SECURITY

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Joint Secretary for North (Nepal and Bhutan) Preeti Saran told

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Ambassador Nancy Powell she thought the United Marxist-Leninist (UML) Party and the Maoists were forming an alliance ahead of Nepali elections. Saran expressed concern that Nepali civil servants were fearful of speaking out against the increasing influence of the Maoist-organized Youth Communist League (YCL) in Nepal's bureaucracy. Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Secretary for Border Management Umesh Narayan Panjiar confirmed to Ambassador Powell the Government of India's (GOI) full support to Nepal to ensure that criminal elements and violence were kept to a minimum on the Indo-Nepal border during elections. A group of roundtable experts told Ambassador Powell that India used the Terai to maintain balance in the region, that the Maoists were prepared to move into a post-election vacuum, and that Nepal's political parties were not prepared for elections.
END SUMMARY.

MEA Concerned Over "Newfound UML-Maoist Unity"

12. (C) In a January 30 meeting, MEA Joint Secretary for North (Nepal and Bhutan) Preeti Saran expressed concern to Ambassador Powell that a "newfound Left unity" among the UML Party and the Maoists was taking root in Nepal. Recent Nepali delegations related a "disturbing trend" of the Maoist-run YCL's "creep into civil bureaucracy," according to Saran, adding that Nepali civil bureaucrats were increasingly fearful of repercussions for expressing dissenting views. Ambassador Powell assessed that the increasing YCL activity was worrisome, but had been more noticeable in threats to the business community than to the civil service. She thought it was unlikely the UML would move toward a post-election alliance with the Maoists. Citing a recent news item, Saran inquired whether the USG position had changed vis-a-vis Maoists. Ambassador Powell replied that the story was a complete fabrication of the media, and that the U.S. position had not changed.

MHA Committed to Border Security for Nepal Elections

13. (C) MHA Secretary for Border Management Umesh Narayan Panjiar assured Ambassador Powell January 30 that the GOI would provide all possible support to the Government of Nepal (GON) to ensure free and fair elections, and that border

forces would be increased during elections. It was essential that the Indian border patrol (Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)) work with Indian states and the GON to keep criminal elements from crossing the border into the Terai during elections, said Panjiar. He conceded, however, that substantial coverage of the long border was not possible, given the frequent daily crossings of local villagers. Asked if the SSB used technology such as night-imaging to police the border, Panjiar replied that it did not, revealing that the level of sophistication on the Indo-Nepal border was not as great as that of the Indo-Pakistan or Indo-Bangladesh borders. However, equipment would be upgraded for the Nepali elections, he maintained. Ambassador Powell noted that violence surrounding political rallies was an issue of concern. Panjiar agreed, stating that the violence "needed to be stopped," but did not elaborate on how border forces would prevent it.

Indian Analysts: India Uses the Terai to Maintain Balance -----

¶4. (C) In a roundtable discussion January 30, former Ambassador to Nepal K.V. Rajan opined that conflict in the Terai had always been an issue, and was nothing new. Dr. Ajai Sahni, Executive Director of the Institute of Conflict Management, suggested that events in the Terai were used by India to maintain balance in the region. Ravi Nair, Executive Director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Center, theorized the Maoists were no longer interested in operating in the Terai since they no longer controlled it, coining it the "Maoists' Frankenstein." Ambassador Powell underlined that India had an opportunity to play a positive role on many issues in the Terai, but had not yet stepped up to the plate.

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A Vacuum of Leadership -----

¶5. (C) Rajan indicated that a vacuum of leadership was looming in Nepal, asserting that the Maoists had both privately and publicly made clear that they would not accept the results of an election. "Their behavior indicates they mean it," Rajan emphasized. The army, he added, was looking forward to having a place in the emerging structure in Nepal, and pointed out that "all parties conduct themselves as if no election will happen." Nair concurred, stating that the Maoists were positioning themselves to muscle their way center stage post-elections. Defense analyst Major General Ashok Mehta, declaring that "not a leaf moves in Nepal" without the Maoists' approval, claimed that it was not possible to have a free and fair election. Both Sahni and Nair warned against dismissing the right-wing Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), observing that it was distancing itself from a monarchy-specific agenda. "There is always a group of people who want to get back to the old order," argued Sahni.

Indo-Nepal Military Relationship on the Rise -----

¶6. (C) On the military front, Mehta indicated that the GOI had resumed full military relations with Nepal and that Indo-Nepal training programs had grown and were now on par with Indo-Sri Lankan programs, though Nepal was short of training ammunition.

¶7. (U) Ambassador Powell cleared this cable.
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